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ABSTRACT

This guide contains a list of hints for tutors of English as a Second Language who may be tutoring: (1) an adult needing to learn English in order to live and work in this country, or (2) a student needing to learn English in order to go to school. The list of hints is followed by sample lessons intended to show the kinds of things which can be included in a tutoring session. A short annotated bibliography for further reading is also included. (TL)

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Indochinese Refugee Education Guides

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GENERAL INFORMATION SERIES: Hints for Tutors

Tutoring is a unique situation wherein two individuals come together to work toward a common goal: the student wants to learn a skill which the tutor has mastered. But more than that, it's a chance for two people to get to know one another and to learn about each other. For, while the student is learning the skill, both the tutor and the student are learning about each other: how they think, react, their different cultures and so on.

Everyone approaches tutoring with a little uncertainty. You may wonder whether you are qualified to tutor. If you are interested in helping other people and if you are willing to work, then you are qualified to tutor. You must also be committed to devoting time regularly so that you establish a close relationship with another human being.

This list of hints has been prepared to make tutoring a little easier. You will be tutoring in one of two situations: with an adult who needs to learn English so that he/she can live and work in this country, or with a student who needs to learn English in order to go to school. Some of the hints may seem more applicable to one situation or the other, but they can all be adapted to either situation.

After the list of hints, you'll find some sample lessons. These are intended to show you the kinds of things which can be included in your tutoring session and how to prepare them. A short bibliography for further reading is also included.

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1. BE ON TIME. Never simply fail to show up. If you cannot keep an appointment, call. Try to speak with your student and explain that you'll be unable to meet him. Give an additional assignment if possible. Re-confirm the next appointment. If the student feels you don't care about him or the tutorial, he won't care either.

2. DON'T CONFUSE THE STUDENT. If his classroom teacher wants him to do a particular kind of problem or process in a certain way, go along. Once the student has mastered the skill taught the teacher's way, you may want to introduce another approach. But remember that if you and the teacher are teaching two different methods to the same solution, it will be the student who is caught in the middle. For example: if the teacher wants the student to use non-contracted forms in a composition class ("I will",

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Adapted in part from: Guidebook for Tutors, by Andrew D. Cohen, James C. Kirk and W. Patrick Dickson. (ERIC, ED 1084 326)

instead of "I'll") encourage the student to use these non-contracted forms. When he has mastered these, explain about contractions and style, written and spoken English and so on. Teaching may be a subversive activity, but you shouldn't commit your student to the Revolution.

3. BE PREPARED. Never appear for a lesson unprepared. Try to have several ideas or strategies to work on. If one method doesn't work, be ready to try a different approach. While you should avoid making the tutoring session unpleasant, you must also insure that the student learns. Therefore, if he doesn't understand one approach, switch to another. Also, try to remember which tasks or skills were especially difficult for the student. Check in subsequent lessons to see if he's really mastered these skills.

4. WORK AS CLOSELY WITH THE CLASSROOM TEACHER AS POSSIBLE. Your Vietnamese or Cambodian student may be taking English classes in Adult Education, at the "Y", etc. Your job is twofold: to help him stay with his class and to fill in the background. Don't assume he knows a concept or idea simply because his age-peers do. But don't treat him like an idiot, either. Always try to be sensitive to the student so that you'll be able to judge when he does understand and when he doesn't. By working with the teacher, you'll be able to concentrate your attention on those areas which the teacher feels need improvement, as well as working to broaden the student's understanding of the material. At the same time, listen to the student. What does he feel he needs? What does he want to learn?

5. BEFORE BEGINNING TO TUTOR, DETERMINE AS PRECISELY AS POSSIBLE WHAT THE STUDENT SHOULD LEARN. That is, is your primary task to be teaching English, or teaching math? Teaching English or teaching how American culture works? If you can state the goal as precisely as possible, you'll be able to admit digressions, or enlargements without feeling that you're hopelessly off the track, or have "wasted" a session. Sometimes, a digression is helpful. Periodically, talk with the student about the progress you've made together. Keep a log of each lesson and show the student what progress he's making.

6. DON'T BE AFRAID TO ADMIT YOU DON'T KNOW. If your student asks you a question (usually beginning with "Why") and you don't know the answer, say so. Be wary of rules, especially in English because there are so many exceptions. Avoid asking the student to memorize grammar rules. Rather, help him learn patterns, using real sentences, which make sense. Thus, instead of teaching that adverbs are formed by adding the particle "-ly" to the adjective, teach him sentences like "The beautiful girl dances beautifully" or "The quick dog ran quickly".

7. REMEMBER TO INVOLVE YOUR STUDENT TO THE MAXIMUM DURING THE LESSON. You should not do all the talking. Initially, of course, you will talk more than your student. But remember that he'll learn more as he talks more. Language requires practice. Ask your student questions, elicit his advice about the lesson, etc. Also, use real examples. If you're teaching a lesson about question formation, ask things like "Where's your house?" or "How much does a Coke cost at McDonald's?" Questions like "What is the capital of England?" or "Does the cat have a tail?" aren't nearly as inter-

esting to the student as things from his own life.

8. BE CAREFUL ABOUT CORRECTING. While you might want to correct often during a pronunciation drill or a grammar exercise, you'll not want to correct so frequently during a guided conversation. Avoid embarrassing or humiliating the student in any case. If a student is groping for a word, quietly supply it. Keep the learning activity, whatever it is, going. Momentum is very important in the tutoring session. If you're working on a structure which has required lots of corrections, switch to something the student can handle fairly easily. Rebuild the confidence he may have lost during the more difficult preceding section.

9. VARY THE TUTORING ACTIVITIES. Take walks together, describing the things you see. Read and discuss a story or newspaper article. This is especially effective for adults. Go to a coffee shop and chat. In the more formal "classroom" situation, use a variety of techniques: vocabulary building, structure practice, sentence transformation, etc. Use magazines, pictures, the objects you use and handle everyday. Go into the kitchen to talk about food and food preparation. Go into the garage to talk about the car. Ask about parallel situations in the student's native culture.

10. USE YOUR OWN, REAL LANGUAGE. Imagine the following situation: I'm a teacher of English. I'm on an airplane and the man next to me begins to talk to me. We introduce ourselves:

Him: Hi. My name's Bill Smith. I sell neckwear for Rooster Ties.

Me: Hi. My name's George Brown. I teach English.

Him: English teacher, eh? I'd better watch my grammar.

Of course, he's not totally serious, but partly, he is. Americans are sometimes very self-conscious about their language. We recognize the difference between high school grammar and our real language. Teach your student to speak the way real people speak, not the way they "ought" to speak. For example, English sentences don't end in prepositions, do they? Or do they? Sometimes, they do. Avoid teaching your students hard and fast rules, or stilted styles of speech. They may get into trouble later.

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Two sample lesson plans. These lesson plans have been designed for use with an older student, high school age or adult. They are intended to show how the lessons should form one smooth, continuous flow, from one to the next, although the two lessons given here are not subsequent. You'll notice that the vocabulary in the first, as well as the structures, are fairly basic, but that by the second lesson plan, the student has made progress and has thoroughly mastered the concepts and vocabulary presented in the first lesson.

Sample Lesson Plan #1

Objectives: 1) Question formation with where
2) Vocabulary: prepositions: on, in, next to, beside, over, by, close to, etc.

Props: pencils, box, book and kitchen clock

BACKGROUND: Last time, we learned the questions: "What's this?" "What're these?" and the answers "It's a _____" and "They're _____." We have already taught days of the week and numbers, as well as the question "Who"

I. Start with a quick review of last week's work:

T: What's this?
S: It's a book.
T: Good for you. Okay. What're these?
S: They're pencils.
T: Good. What's this?
S: It's a box.
T: Good. Listen: The pencil is in the box. (Suit action to words.) Listen again: The pencil is in the box. Repeat.
S: The pencil is in the box.

II. T: Very good. Where's the pencil?
The pencil is in the box.
Where's the pencil?
S: The pencil's in the box.
T: Very good. Okay. Ask me. (Hands the pencil to the student.)
S: Where's the pencil?
T: The pencil is in the box.
Now listen. (Puts the pencil on the box.)
Where's the pencil?
The pencil is on the box.
Repeat question and answer.
Where's the pencil?
S: The pencil is on the box.

Continue through this activity, alternating asking and answering the question, using the pencil and the book, etc. When the student's attention begins to flag, change.

III. Take the kitchen clock, with the hands set to 6:00. Ask

T: When's dinner?
Dinner's at 6 o'clock.
Repeat: Dinner's at 6 o'clock.
S: Dinner's at 6 o'clock
T: Good. When's bedtime?
S: Bedtime's at 10 o'clock (Adjust the hands on the clock to give him his cue.)
T: When's Bill coming?
S: Bill's coming at 3 o'clock.
T: Who's Bill? (This will provide a quick break from the new structure and at the same time surprise the student, who

should be able to answer correctly. This will provide good encouragement to the student.)
S: Bill's my friend.
etc.

IV. Wind up with a quick review of the prepositions and close on a positive note by asking the student a question you know he'll get right.

Next session, you can go on to teach the division of the hour* and questions with the auxiliary verb "do" and "will".

So, this lesson continues from last time ("what's this?") into "Where's the pencil?" and "When's dinner?" and prepares for next session. "When does school start?", etc.

* When you teach minutes, decide whether you'll use "ten to" or "ten of" and "ten after" or "ten past"; twelve-thirty, or half past twelve". Remember to be as consistent as possible.

Sample Lesson Plan #2

Objectives: This is a three-stage lesson designed to test and reinforce all previous work. It will involve "wh" questions, questions with auxiliaries "do" and "will", numbers and prepositions.

Session I: Review numbers, questions, etc. Explain that next time will involve an outing to a grocery store. You need to buy things to make a cake.

Q. What do we need?
A. We need chocolate, flour, sugar, butter, eggs.
Q. Where are we going?
A. We're going to the supermarket.
Q. Do we need to buy flour?
A. No, we have some.
Q. When'll we go?
A. We'll go on Saturday.

Session II: At the supermarket:

Q. Where's the vegetable department?
A. It's near the door.
Q. Where's the chocolate?
A. It's in the baking section, next to the walnuts.

Session III: At home

Q. What are we doing?
A. We're baking a cake.
Q. Why are we baking a cake?
A. Because we're hungry.

etc.

End of Session III: Eat the cake

This total activity in three parts not only reinforces all things the student has learned, it serves to remind the student of the reason he's learning English and graphically shows him how much English he's learned. Further, it varies the routine and shows him an aspect of American culture.

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